2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

the paramount moral values of the Namoos. The oath a Namoo swears by his father and his goatskin and his three cowrie shells to rebut an accusation or assert his honesty is evidence of this.

The natives think of these rules as coeval with their social order. They are axioms of conduct, which men accept without questioning as they accept the fact that one is born a Namoo. Since they are binding on and restricted to the patrilineal line of descent, these avoidances serve to express the ultimate and unconditional validity of agnatic descent, through which the individual's place in a corporate unit is irrevocably fixed at birth, and by which his whole social and spiritual destiny is largely controlled. Through ignorance or stupidity, irreverence or lack of self-control, individuals sometimes, though very rarely, break these taboos. Such lapses will bring down mystical retribution on the sinner's head; that is his affair. They cannot impair the intrinsic validity of these rules or undermine their obligatory character.

It would be inconceivable for a Namoo to flout the taboo of the goatskin loin-cover for the dead. To do so would be a sacrilege so gratuitous and so lunatic as to lie beyond the bounds of sane human behaviour. Actually a situation in which such a sacrilege would be possible would never occur, for the simple reason that a death is an affair of the clan. The clan elders conduct all mortuary and funeral ceremonies, and the inviolability of the prescribed ritual is thus safeguarded by the mechanics of its performance.

It is otherwise with the fowl taboo. This too the natives consider to be something so fundamental and axiomatic that it requires no sanction against possible breach except by accident. The danger of a breach occurs only with children. The first-born child who eats a fowl or even a hen's egg, either through inadvertence, through greed, or through childish recklessness, may sink into a decline (*u burəmrəme*), or at the least will break out in a rash on the head (*u zug koorəme*). But such a transgression by a child is venial, and the antidote is simple. The child is given an infusion of fowl droppings in water to drink which makes him vomit and so purges him.

Observation and questioning show that breaches of this taboo are as rare as the natives assert them to be. I have often seen a first-born man (*nɔ-kihir*, pl. *-kihib*, one who taboos the fowl) sacrificing fowls to his ancestor spirits and leaving them to others to consume. After such a rite a *nɔ-kihir* always washes his hands carefully lest he contaminate his food at the next meal with the blood of the fowl. Not only do parents, siblings, and other relatives take care to prevent children from breaking the taboo, but the children who have to observe it have a horror of doing so. By the time they are five or six years old children will tell an inquirer with great emphasis, 'I am an eldest child, and I don't eat fowl'. Though they do not know the myth that accounts for the taboo, they appreciate its obligatory character.

We have spoken of these taboos as symbols of moral values because, though binding on all Namoos, they do not imply specific ties either political or ceremonial, and are obligatory on individuals. Their observance is in the last resort a matter of conscience and belief. In the widest

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

793 one who was human (*vor*) becomes a spirit (*kpiim*). For this service, too,
471 the tɛndaana receives only prescribed portions of the sacrificial animals. If
a man wants to break virgin land for cultivation, he requires the consent
[311] of the tɛndaana in whose *tɛŋ* the land lies. Unless the tɛndaana comes to
[775] cut the boundaries (*kie*) of the farm, its cultivation will bring nothing but
disaster on the farmer. The tɛndaana's reward is, again, only a portion
of the sacrifices and occasional gifts of grain in subsequent years. Lastly,
there are the circumstances in which a tɛndaana must be called upon to
[682 make peace between man and the Earth. The weightiest of these is in the
782] case of blood shed in strife, whether the victim dies or not. Atonement
sacrifices must be offered by both parties through the tɛndaana of the *tɛŋ*
where the blood was shed, and, in clans that have the tɛndaanaship,
●[673 through their own tɛndaanas as well. There are also less heinous sacrileges
782] and even venial sins—such as wearing cloth garments near certain *tɛŋg-
bana*—for which small atonement sacrifices must be offered through the
tɛndaana; and there are some minor accidents which must be ritually
cancelled out by a sacrifice to the Earth. If a house burns down, for
example, it is thought of as a quasi-mystical disaster, like a failure of one's
crops, and the fire must be ritually 'quenched' by the tɛndaana, after it
has been physically put out.

793 For all these ritual services, which tɛndaanas regard both as duties
471 that can be neglected only at peril of life and as rights indicating their
status and ritual jurisdiction, no payment is given other than portions of
[511] the sacrifices. To people with the standard of living of the Tallensi the
value of such perquisites is by no means negligible. It is a common saying
that all tɛndaanas are gluttons and that they are never short of meat.
Cynics say that the office of tɛndaana is coveted for the meat it brings in.
We must remember, however, that when we speak of a tɛndaana here it
would be more appropriate to speak of a tɛndaana and his lineage or clan.
For a tɛndaana can and frequently does send one or more of his clansmen
to deputize for him and sometimes even delegates some of his duties
to cognates not of his clan; and the rewards of his services must be shared
with them and with his close agnates.

793 Certain taboos of the Earth are obligatory on all tɛndaanas. Thus it is
784 a taboo for cloth garments to be worn in the vicinity of any of the im-
291 portant *tɛŋgbana* like Doo or of the homesteads of all except a few tɛn-
daanas. My clothing was a constant embarrassment to tɛndaanas even
after they had resigned themselves to my European shortcomings. As
tɛndaanas can never lay aside their priestly bonds with the Earth, they
may never wear cloth. Instead, they wear dressed skins of domestic or
wild ungulates. A tɛndaana dressed in his finest skins on a solemn
occasion has an appearance of hieratic dignity that is most impressive.

793 There are also, as we have learnt (cf. p. 142), local *tɛŋ* taboos obligatory
784 on everybody who lives on that *tɛŋ*, and serving to mark it off from other
779 *tɛŋ*. Among the commonest are the prohibition against using red ochre
(*tandaŋanze'e*) for plastering the homestead or grass for roofing it, and the
taboos against killing certain reptiles. In the observance of these taboos,
as in their compliance with all the obligations and observances connected
with the Earth, Tallensi are extremely conscientious. In consequence,

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

to it; and nowadays the natives lay more stress on this than on the ancient glory of success in war. There was the mystical danger of reprisals from the spirit of one's victim (*gil*) following one all one's life. There was the hate created in the dead man's kin, agnates and extra-clan kin, including probably some of one's own clansmen or clansmen's wives. At best they might try to injure one by means of bad medicine; at worst it meant that one could never take part in a sacrifice or meal in which they shared. If one did, their hidden hatred had a mystical power to kill one. Nor did a man who had excelled in war derive any social, economic, or political advantage from it. It did not add to his wealth or give him more influence in the councils of the community. Soon even the fame of his prowess became dim, for it is bad form to talk publicly, during his lifetime, about the deeds of a man who has slain an enemy. It 'whitens (*pɛlag*)' him—that is, exposes him to the wrath of his victim's spirit which resents public comment on his defeat. A great fighter is praised in dirges and speeches after his death. But in the past, as now, it was the good farmer and not the bold fighter who was held up as the ideal of a worthwhile life.

Tallensi speak of fighting with weapons, for whatever reason, as one of the necessary evils of the old days. They look back without regrets on the passing of warfare. They regard the shedding of human blood, even in self-defence or in justifiable anger, as sinful. To kill a man in war was not homicide; one did not have to make heavy expiatory sacrifices to the Earth for it, yet one could never get rid of the blood taint (*ziem*). In 1936 two of the oldest men I knew died. There was much whispered talk about them. People pointed out that they had died in utter penury, lacking even a sheep for their grave-clout. Yet at different times in their long lives they had owned many cattle and had had several wives. Worse still, they had died leaving only one or two young children, the survivors of large families. Their lives had been tragically futile, by Tale standards. And why? Because they had both been redoubtable fighters in their young days; they had killed men in war; and this was the nemesis. All the animals they had sacrificed in expiation had been in vain, in the long run.

The most heinous sin of all was to instigate (*sa*) a war. It did not matter if the man had justice on his side. In the long run he paid for his sin with sickness and death, and the tale of misfortune might follow his descendants in the male line for generations. When Siiyɛlib died, the diviner consulted to find out the cause of his death revealed an unexampled story of misfortune going back twenty-five years. One after another, Siiyɛlib's wives and children had died; rinderpest had wiped out his cattle; and at last he himself had died without a son to mourn him [illegible] in extreme poverty. All this went back to his part in the Tong Hills Expedition of 1910–11, of which, the natives believe, he had been one of the prime instigators.

Before the arrival of the British the Tallensi, in common with their neighbours, had no judicial system. This was in keeping with their lack of a centralized form of government. As far as there was a 'rule of law'—that is, general observance of rights and obligations in property relations, in person-to-person relations, in intra- and inter-group relations subject

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

economic and social activities there is co-operation, friendliness and tolerance, almost equality. This is more marked between father and child than between mother and child. A father is always addressed by his personal name, a mother is always called *mma*, my mother. Affectively, however, a powerful tension exists between parent and child. A parent's authority may not be flouted, though he or she is expected to be affectionate and indulgent. Sin, in Tale ideology, is primarily an offence against the person, status, or rights of the living parents, or the parent-images—the ancestor spirits.

The structure of this relationship makes it possible for children to acquiesce immediately in the commands and teachings of their parents or parent-substitutes. Children are, as a rule, very obedient. If they refuse to carry out an order there is usually some very valid reason—acknowledged as such by both parents and children—such as that it is some one else's turn. But the parent-child relationship is educationally fundamental in another sense—it is the paradigm of all moral relationships.

It is worth noting, by contrast, that the relationship between grandparent and grandchild is the reverse of that between parent and child. In this case equality, compatibility and partisanship, as if in league against the generation between them, are emphasized, more particularly by the joking relationship—mutual ragging among the Tallensi—permitted between grandparent and grandchild.

The social space. How these relationships function in the educational development of a Tale child is determined by its social space.[1] An individual's social space is a product of that segment of the social structure and that segment of the habitat with which he or she is in effective contact. To put it in another way, the social space is the society in its ecological setting seen from the individual's point of view. The individual creates his social space but is himself in turn formed by it. On the one hand, his range of experiences and behaviour are controlled by his social space, and on the other, everything he learns causes it to expand and become more differentiated. In the lifetime of the individual it changes *pari passu* with his psycho-physical and social development.

[1] This term is employed here for want of an apter one. It has been used in a different sense by Simmel and others.

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

After that she must wear a perineal band even at night, in the privacy of her own room, for the sake of modesty. Not to do so, *de mara valəm*, ' is embarrassing ' for her and others. Similarly it is indecorous for a young man, especially if he is married, to go about without a loin cloth. His comrades would scoff at him, womenfolk jeer, and his wife be ashamed. Yet the Tallensi have not the slightest sense of shame about the naked body or any physiological functions, all of which they discuss publicly and openly. Ask any one, child or adult, the sex of an infant and the answer will be to open its legs and expose the genitals with the word ' boy ' or ' girl '. An infant's excretory processes arouse no embarrassment and meet with no attempts at regulation. As we have seen it is expected to learn cleanliness in due course. The child is made to understand that excreting indoors is a nuisance to those who have to keep the house clean. No one would dream of chastising an infant for this misdemeanour. These are all matters of decency and decorum learnt without formal instructions as direct adjustments to the social space, through the influence of the expectation of normal behaviour.

It is otherwise with the morality of property. A thief incurs disgrace and universal opprobrium, and even small children of 6 and 7 express contempt for one. A child that steals, like one who neglects a task, can expect a severe beating if his father is a conscientious citizen. ' Don't let Tii (a boy of about 6) come and see your things,' said Batiignwol, a little girl of 7 or 8, to me one day, ' he 's a thief. He stole his mother's ground-nuts and meat and his father beat him and tied him up.' Theft is immoral as well as criminal. Lying, by contrast, is considered merely foolish and contemptible. It causes annoyance and a liar's comrades distrust him, but one would not punish a child for lying unless it led to serious consequences. Such misdemeanours, nevertheless, go beyond what is merely ' unbecoming '. They are not nice, *a-pu maha*.

Finally there is a type of observance which is a matter of conscience rather than of public approval or reprobation. Many of these have a ritual character and most of them are associated with mystical notions. There are food taboos which must be observed from infancy; there are ritual obligations such as those connected with mourning, which a person may escape till he reaches adulthood, but